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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Soviet ABM Breakout

In developing and supplying "yellow rain" for use against primitive Hmong tribesmen and Afghan freedom fighters, the Soviet Union treated chemical and biological weapons treaties with brazen contempt. Now evidence is growing that it has taken the same attitude toward the anti-ballistic missile limitations in the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty.

The ABM limitation in SALT-I is the granddaddy of nuclear-arms control. Signed in 1972 by President Richard Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev, it has been cited as the most successful arms-control agreement and perhaps the one most central to strategic weapons balance between the U.S. and U.S.S.R. It provides sharp limitations on the deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems to shoot down incoming missile warheads. Each side is allowed only one ABM system with not more than 100 launchers. Since this means a system can always be saturated with 101 warheads, the U.S. has entirely forsaken its one system, while the Soviets have built an ABM around Moscow and have been energetically upgrading it these last few years.

Within the past few months, however, U.S. intelligence has detected a new ABM radar at Abalakovo, far away from Moscow but near fields of SS-19, SS-11 and SS-18 intercontinental missiles. The installation, larger than a football field, has apparently been under construction for two years, though detected only recently.

The Abalakovo radar is the most clear-cut violation of the ABM treaty to date. The treaty provides that large phased-array radars of this type can be deployed only along the national periphery and "oriented outward," so they can be used for early warning systems but not ABM battle management. The Abalakovo radar is located in the central U.S.S.R. about 500 miles north of Mongolia and 3,000 miles from the Pacific coast.

Even more significantly, the Abalakovo radar is not the first but the sixth large phased-array radar completed or under construction in the Soviet Union. The others have been known to the U.S. but were either arguably on the periphery or otherwise allowed under the treaty. Large phased-array radars are already in operation at Pechora near the Caspian Sea, Lyaki in the northwest and Mishleka in the far east. In addition, ABM radars, presumably permitted by the treaty, are Saryshagan at the Soviet's test range in central U.S.S.R. and the Pushkino system now being constructed near Moscow. The Abalakovo radar, which cannot be rationalized under the treaty, is aimed over the northeastern U.S.S.R. toward Alaska, and would fill in the final gap in an ABM radar network covering almost the entire Soviet Union.

All six radars are practically identical, housed in structures about 500 feet wide and more than 100 feet high resembling decapitated pyramids. They have tremendous range and can provide not only early warning of an attack but also can help direct the firing of anti-ballistic missiles to bring down the incoming missiles. Indeed, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff said in January 1981 that the radars then under construction "may be designed to improve impact predictions and target handling capabilities for ABM battle management." This warning came even before discovery of the Abalakovo radar.

Besides the radars, the Soviets also have tested a variety of surface-to-air missiles in an ABM mode, in violation of the treaty, including the SAM-10 and SAM-12. These missiles are mobile, which is another treaty violation, and are now in mass production. Around Moscow, the Soviets are deploying the ABM-3 system of SHO-4 and SHO-8 missiles along with mobile radars; more than 100 silos have been sighted, which may be another viola-

tion of the limits on the number of silos allowed by the ABM treaty. The Soviets have also tested rapidly reloading these silos in two hours, yet another violation.

Last Friday Sen. Steve Symms wrote to President Reagan that the latest reports "suggest the existence of a clear-cut, overt violation of the ABM treaty entailing as many as five key provisions." And the Abalakovo violation adds urgency to the warning Sen. James McClure issued on the Senate floor last month that the Soviets "are in fact already deploying a nationwide ABM defense."

Now, the ABM limits have never been our favorite arms-control idea. But it certainly changes the strategic balance if the Soviets build an ABM while we abide by a treaty outlawing it. In light of a Soviet ABM, we need to think about missile defense of our own, and about how to secure our retaliatory power—probably with flocks of small and highly accurate cruise missiles to fly under these defenses. But, more broadly, we need to spend less of our time and energy on negotiating treaties with people who break them, and more on securing our own defense and retaliatory power.